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P 101457Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY TBILISI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0058
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0101

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 001550

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/09/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [RU](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: SITREP 28: GEORGIAN POLICEMAN KILLED AT
CHECKPOINT: RUSSIANS BEGIN WITHDRAWAL

REF: TBILISI 1530

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. A Georgian police officer was shot while manning his regular post in Karaleti, reportedly by an Ossetian irregular according to the Interior Ministry. Russian vehicles and South Ossetian militias seem to have begun withdrawing from positions inside Georgia proper on a limited basis. The OSCE successfully passed Russian checkpoints north of Gori on September 10, but still were unable to get as far as Tskhinvali. World Food Program officials and their assistance supplies were refused access to the areas north of Gori behind Russian checkpoints and to South Ossetia for the 15th day in a row; they have sought USG help in gaining access. New Rights Leader Gamkrelidze echoed Labor Leader Natelishvili in calling for Saakashvili's resignation. End Summary.

GEORGIAN POLICEMAN SHOT IN KARALETI

¶2. (SBU) Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA) sources informed post that a Georgian police officer was shot and killed at his normal post at the village of Karaleti the morning of September 10. The assailant is unknown, but the MOIA suggested it could have been Ossetian militia. The OSCE heard a report from local officials that a band of approximately seven men was seen in the woods west of the victim's post, which would suggest to the OSCE that it was unlikely to have been Russian assailants. Local Georgian authorities have begun an investigation.

RUSSIANS BEGIN WITHDRAWAL

¶3. (C) The press reports the departure of a small number of Russian vehicles from Poti and the withdrawal of Ossetian militias from the village of Ganmukhuri, where Georgian police have reasserted control of the village. Reports indicate a camp for children, a beach, and police stations were burned by militias, and the residents were pressured to accept Russian passports. (COMMENT: Ganmukhuri is located in a small parcel of land near the Black Sea just north of the Enguri River, outside the administrative border of Abkhazia but cut off from the rest of undisputed Georgian territory by the river. Deputy Minister of Reintegration Rakviashvili told PolOff on September 9 that Abkhaz "authorities" were looking to annex four villages outside but close to the administrative border, including Ganmukhuri. The departure of militias from the village could therefore be a positive sign that such expansive impulses from the Abkhaz side are being restrained. End comment.)

¶4. (U) Meanwhile, the Georgian press gave a great deal of coverage to the story about Russia reportedly exchanging

diplomatic notes establishing formal diplomatic relations with the "governments" of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov held a joint press briefing with the "foreign ministers" of the two breakaway regions, at which he stated that Russia had signed several agreements with the two entities and would provide military assistance to both, including the stationing of a total of 3,800 regular Russian Army troops.

OSCE GETS ACCESS, BUT WFP DOESN'T

15. (SBU) After a September 9 meeting with Russian General Kulakhmetov, the OSCE monitors received permission to travel past Russian checkpoints at Karaleti and Variani, as far north as Megvrekisi, southeast of Tskhinvali. Kulakhmetov did not give overt permission for continued patrols; the OSCE intends to keep Kulakhmetov informed, but proceed as if it has such clearance.

16. (SBU) The regional director of the World Food Program (WFP) told post that they were turned away from the Russian checkpoint at Karaleti on September 9, the 15th day in a row Russian officials refused access to undisputed Georgian territory. The WFP officials were traveling in vehicles clearly marked with the UN insignia, including their truck, which carried food and non-food items. The officials also presented official passports and identification documents identifying them as UN employees. The regional director requested assistance from the USG in removing the obstacles to humanitarian assessments and relief, such as through public statements condemning the lack of access and the

TBILISI 00001550 002 OF 002

involvement of the press in publicizing the difficulties.

ANOTHER CALL FOR SAKASHVILI'S RESIGNATION

17. (SBU) Following Labor Leader's Natelashvili's September 8 statement (see reftel), New Rights Party Leader David Gamkrelidze stated in a September 9 press conference that President Saakashvili should resign and early presidential and parliamentary elections should be held. He accused the government of starting the armed conflict and suggested that Georgia had now lost both the breakaway regions and its chances for joining NATO. Having just returned from a trip to the United States, Gamkrelidze claimed that every single person in the U.S. is indignant at Saakashvili's irresponsible behavior and that even Senator McCain is now desperately calling for the improvement of U.S.-Russian relations (sic).

TEFFT